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A

SPEECH

Intended to have been

SPOKEN

IN THE

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

[PRICE ONE SHILLING.]

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On the Second of February, 1784.

LONDON,

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MDCCLXXXIV.

A

SPEECH, &c.

Mr. SPEAKER,

IF ever there was a time which demanded the moſt ſerious attention of parliament, it is the preſent period; a period remarkable for uncommon incidents, and for ſuch as have a tendency to produce the moſt important effects. It behoves us, therefore, to proceed in our deliberations with the greateſt regard to the public good, which may be irretrievably injured, but never can be promoted, by a continuance of thoſe violent and unconſtitutional meaſures which have lately marked the temper of this houſe. When I reflect on the public tranſactions

of the two laſt months, I know not whether indignation or ſorrow be more ſtrongly excited in my breaſt. Within that ſhort, but eventful period, our wiſdom as legiſlators, our loyalty as ſubjects, our fidelity as repreſentatives, and our virtue as members of the community, have received ſuch a ſtain as will be extremely difficult to efface, and ſuch as nothing but a total change of conduct ever can atone. Permit me, therefore, to requeſt the patience of the houſe, while, from a fervent deſire of conducing to that purpoſe, I attempt a retroſpective view of thoſe melancholy and turbulent ſcenes, in which the intereſts and reputation of all of us are ſo deeply concerned.

Since the commencement of the preſent ſeſſion, we have ſeen brought into this houſe, and paſſed by a great majority, a bill, which, if not rejected by another branch of the legiſlature, would have inevitably ſubverted the conſtitution of this country. By that bill the whole patronage of India,

India, which has been computed to afford annually a ſum not leſs than three millions ſterling, would, in fact, have been veſted in the miniſter. The pernicious conſequences which muſt have reſulted from this exorbitant inveſtiture, I ſhudder to contemplate. Have we ſo little availed ourſelves of the hiſtory of other ages and nations; are we ſo little acquainted with the natural diſpoſitions of mankind, as not to foreſee that ſuch a power of corruption muſt lead to the ſubverſion of public liberty? Would the enormous ambition, which evidently projected that quadriennial government (for ſuch it was), not be intereſted to continue it; or would a majority of the parliament refuſe, to the rewarder of their favours, that ſupport which they had formerly granted, from motives either of friendſhip or expectation? The ſuppoſition is in the higheſt degree repugnant to probability.

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ably and fully delineated the pernicious conſequences which would have reſulted from the Eaſt-India bill, that I ſhall content myſelf with giving, in as few words as poſſible, the ſubſtance of his excellent obſervations.

The power which the miniſter muſt have acquired by this bill is almoſt beyond conception. He would have riſen up a coloſſus, to overturn the ſolid fabric of the ſtate. Uncontroulable by the ſovereign; uncontrouled and ſupported by parliament; governing in Europe by irreſiſtible influence, and in the Eaſt with unbounded authority; nominally the miniſter, but in effect the tyrant, of the crown; he would have graſped in his rapacious hands the legiſlative and executive powers; a union incompatible with liberty; and would have tranſplanted the deſpotiſm of Aſia into a country, which has hitherto, for its ſpirit of freedom, been the admiration and envy of the world.

It gives me the utmoſt regret to obſerve, that the imprudence (I might ſay folly) of

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our conduct ſurpaſſes the example of all former times. In the rage of reform, the laſt parliament retrenched, injurioufly, the influence of the crown; the preſent, with yet greater indiſcretion, increaſes that of the miniſter. Imitating the fatal policy, which tranſlated the ſeat of the Roman government from the ancient capital to the ſhores of the Helleſpont, we would transfer the power of the crown, with infinitely more than its former weight, from the hands of the ſovereign to thoſe of his ſervants; and the miniſter would prove the Byzantium of the Britiſh conſtitution.

The nature and ſubſtance of the bill offered not greater violence to the conſtitution, than the manner in which it was conducted did to all legiſlative decorum. It was brought into parliament at a ſeaſon when hardly more than the half of the members are aſſembled: it was hurried through the houſe with a rapidity, which not only precluded attentive deliberation, but even ſuſpended the common forms of

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legal enquiry and juſtice: I wiſh I could not add, that, in proſtituting the ſanction of office to this arbitrary meaſure of miniſters, an a——y g——l was ſo inconſiderate (I ſhall give it no harſher name) as to ſupport it, by attempting to throw ridicule on that venerable inſtrument which is the only ſecurity of all the franchiſes in the nation.

Such was the tendency and progreſs of a bill, which affords one of the moſt flagrant inſtances of violence, uſurpation, and rapacity, ever exhibited by the repreſentatives of a free people. To ſtop the fury of this peſtilential contagion, was an honour reſerved for the virtue of the other houſe of parliament. Would to God we had thenceforth abandoned thoſe motives and principles, by which we had been ſo diſgracefully ſeduced! The miſconduct of the majority might then have been aſcribed to a cauſe not inconſiſtent with good intentions. But, alas! we have left no room for the imputation of an error

error of judgement. Our ſubſequent proceedings too plainly evince, that we are actuated by a ſpirit inimical to the government of our country. Shew me one principle of the conſtitution, which, during this ignominious period of turbulence and diſtraction, we have not daringly violated. Two of its eſſential principles are univerſally admitted: one is, that the crown enjoys the prerogative of diſſolving the parliament; and the other, that of chooſing its own miniſters. Suffer me briefly to mention the manner in which we have acted reſpecting each. I ſhall begin with the former.

When the Eaſt-India bill was rejected by the houſe of Lords, and the policy, which had planned it, became the ſubject of general cenſure, his majeſty, from that regard to the public welfare, ſo evident through the whole of his reign, judged it proper to diſmiſs a ſet of miniſters, whoſe ſchemes threatened ruin both to the rights of the crown and the people.

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There was, at that time, great reaſon to expect that the royal prerogative would be exerted in diſſolving the parliament; and this opinion was founded upon the natural idea, that in paſſing a bill ſo repugnant to the principles of the conſtitution, the majority of the Houſe of Commons muſt have been under undue influence; whether in point of judgement, or integrity, their ſubſequent conduct will beſt explain. The occaſion was certainly ſuch as ſeemed to demand the extraordinary interpoſition of the crown; and that the members of the majority themſelves were conſcious of its expediency, is inconteſtible, from the addreſs which they preſented, to deprecate the exertion of the royal power. The pretext for this meaſure (for what faction is without its pretexts?) was, the good of the nation, the important buſineſs of which, they ſaid, muſt ſuffer irretrievable injury by a diſſolution of parliament at that juncture. The anſwer from the throne was ſuch as became a

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wiſe monarch; ſufficiently explicit for a gracious reply; but yet ſo indefinite as not to preclude the exerciſe of the prerogative, if circumſtances ſhould render it expedient.

Under this precarious reprieve, the party had a fair opportunity of proceeding upon the national buſineſs, concerning which they had expreſſed ſo great ſolicitude; but nothing was farther from their deſign. During more than ſix weeks, which have ſince elapſed, they have, inſtead of diſpatching even the moſt urgent affairs of government, thrown every poſſible obſtruction in the way; equally regardleſs of the tranquillity and the ſafety of the nation. The buſineſs of the public is inceſſantly their cry; but the more important buſineſs of the party is that which employs their whole attention. While with all their brute weight they labour to clog the wheels of government, they exclaim, as a fault of the miniſters, that the wheels of government do not go

round. And, to complete their inconſiſtency, while they implore the crown not to exert the prerogative of diſſolving parliament, they have recourſe to the outrageous indecency of ſetting that prerogative at defiance.

I ſhall now, ſir, proceed to conſider the other conſtitutional prerogative of the crown, which this houſe has alſo of late repeatedly attempted to violate; I mean that of appointing the miniſters. This prerogative has been inherent in the ſovereign from the earlieſt period of the monarchy; and cannot be exerciſed by either of the legiſlative aſſemblies, without deſtroying the neceſſary independence of the executive power. It is, beyond all queſtion, the *origo malorum* in the preſent conteſt; and therefore we need not be ſurpriſed when, on this ſubject, we find the party extremely ſore. Its two leaders, whom, for the ſake of diſtinction, I ſhall call the Duumvirs, were animated by the ſucceſs of their laſt enterprize, in which they

had taken the cabinet by ſtorm; and both of them felt the ſtrongeſt incitement to attempt a freſh irruption. But ſecretly dreading to hazzard an effort, which, if unſucceſsful, might plunge their affairs in irretrievable ruin, they reſolved to poſtpone a general aſſault, and to content themſelves with making only gradual approaches. To ſupport the ſpirits of their adherents however, and to intimidate the miniſters, if poſſible, to evacuate their places, they oſtentatiouſly avowed the moſt determined reſolution of proceeding to extremities; and motion after motion was almoſt daily introduced, as ſignificant preludes to the cataſtrophe of adminiſtration. A reſolution accordingly paſſed, that the new miniſters had not the confidence of this houſe; upon the ground, as the party gave forth, that they had come into power by ſecret influence. Let us ſee to what this charge really amounts.

In an hour which threatened deſtruction both to the prerogatives of the crown,

and the liberties of the people, a nobleman, of great rank and fortune, received a meſſage to attend on his majeſty, to whom, in conſequence of the ſovereign's requeſt, he gave his advice on the critical ſituation of public affairs; and the miniſters were diſmiſſed a few days after. This is the whole of the fact; and was ever any charge more abſurd? It has been well obſerved by a noble and judicious lord in this houſe, that the great King William was wont to conſult privately with ſir William Temple, more than with all his miniſters together; and that miniſters are as much reſponſible for counſels, by whomſoever ſuggeſted, in which they have acquieſced, and under which they have acted, as for thoſe given immediately by themſelves, in their miniſterial capacity. In fact, it is both a privilege and a duty of every ſubject, though more particularly of a nobleman, to offer advice to his ſovereign, in matters which concern the public welfare; and thoſe miniſters

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will always be leaſt deſirous to monopolize the royal ear, who have the leaſt inclination to abuſe it.

I hope, ſir, enough has been ſaid to convince all candid men, that the charge of ſecret influence is not only groundleſs, but abſurd. The preſent miniſters are not only entitled to the confidence of this houſe; but to its higheſt eſteem and gratitude. They accepted of the reins of government at a time when the ſafety of the ſtate called aloud for the diſmiſſion of their predeceſſors; and their conduct has been ſuch as merits, and cannot fail to procure them, the general applauſe of the nation. The early abilities of the firſt of his majeſty's miniſters, ſurpaſs whatever is to be found united in ancient or modern times, of ſtateſmen, orators, and patriots. Diſtinguiſhed over the world by the luſtre of his deſcent, yet farther diſtinguiſhed and endeared by his own extraordinary accompliſhments and virtues, he affords a glorious proſpect

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of ſupporting, with paternal vigour and renown, both the dignity of his ſovereign, and the intereſts of his country.

Your ſons will bluſh their fathers were his foes.

Deeply affected as I am, ſir, with the unparliamentary conduct, to which we are of late ſo familiarized in this houſe, I behold with additional concern our unconſtitutional proceedings without doors. By what principle of the Britiſh government are we entitled to interfere in the arrangement of an adminiſtration? Shall there be no end of our inconſiſtency? One moment, we enflame by our intemperate conduct; in the next, we labour to conciliate. At the St. Alban's tavern, we aſſume the title of independent country-gentlemen; though we diſplay our independence in a way not very clear, by ſubmitting to be the runners of a party. The late miniſters had daringly offered violence to the moſt ſacred principles of the conſtitution; and can we, therefore,

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urge the neceſſity of a *ſtrong* adminiſtration, in which thoſe very men ſhould be included? If we will employ ourſelves in the work of conciliation, for God's ſake! let it be in conciliating ourſelves to reaſon, moderation, and the principles of the conſtitution, which cannot be violated without the utmoſt danger to the public. Shall we, through the whole of our conduct, afford the world reaſon to conclude, that we know not the plaineſt maxims of our government; or, that knowing, we wilfully violate them? In either caſe it is certain, that our political exiſtence cannot be too ſoon diſſolved.

If any thing can exceed our former abſurdities, it is the motion now under conſideration. I here beg leave to recite it.

" That it is the opinion of this houſe, That the continuance of the preſent miniſters in power, after the reſolution of this houſe, is an obſtacle to a firm, efficient, extended, and united adminiſtration, which could alone ſave this country."

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Had this motion been really framed with the view of diſplaying the merits of the preſent adminiſtration, or of ſatirizing the coalition-party, it could hardly have been expreſſed in terms better adapted to that equivocal purpoſe. In the firſt place, is it poſſible for any miniſtry to ſhew greater *firmneſs* than the preſent, in ſupporting the conſtitution of their country? The truth is, they have made the nobleſt ſtand againſt a deſperate faction, of any that occur in the Britiſh annals. Their conduct, in this point, does the higheſt honour to their fortitude; and will, it is to be hoped, have the effect of repreſſing, in future, the extravagance of unmerited oppoſition.

Secondly, in regard to *efficient:* if this epithet be meant to imply a want of efficiency in the preſent adminiſtration, the charge muſt recoil upon their opponents; with the aggravating circumſtance of a tacit acknowledgement, that their conduct is the very oppoſite of that "which could alone ſave this country."

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In the third place with reſpect to *extended*; the adminiſtration is of the uſual extent, though it does not indeed include thoſe men who have ſo juſtly forfeited the confidence of their king and country.

Laſtly, as to *united*; ſo far as we may judge from appearances, no members of an adminiſtration can be more cloſely united than thoſe of the preſent; and their union promiſes to continue the more firm, that they are not, like ſome other confederates, a body of heterogeneous men, aſſociated together for the purpoſe of mutual intereſt and convenience.

I cannot conclude my comment on this motion, without obſerving, that the principle upon which it is founded, is in the higheſt degree repugnant to the profeſſed object of thoſe who framed it. The means propoſed for obtaining the end in view, are the moſt unſuitable that could be imagined. For, as government cannot be conducted without an adminiſtration, the conſequence would be, ſhould the preſent

miniſters reſign their places, that the new arrangement muſt be completed with precipitancy; and how far a firm and united adminiſtration could reſult from that circumſtance, I ſubmit to the judgement of the houſe. Permit me to add, in reſpect to this motion, that it breathes more the ſpirit of the aſſociated livery, in their vulgar carouſels at the election of a city-magiſtrate, than that of a legiſlative aſſembly. With regard to the ſcheme of inſiſting upon the reſignation of the miniſters, previouſly to a treaty of partition, it evidently betrays a deſign of *running* into the ſeats of government; and, indeed, the neceſſity of their immediate occupation might be pleaded in defence of the burglary.

It is unneceſſary to obſerve, as the fact is notorious, that the preſent diſturbances are ſupported entirely by the members of the coalition. We may all remember the time when theſe Duumvirs were not in alliance with each other. How often have

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theſe walls reſounded with the din of their mutual reproaches! how often with their moſt ſolemn vows of irreconcileable averſion and contempt! Can the name of *coalition* have the miraculous power of producing an inſtantaneous and total change in human ſentiment and affection? And muſt this houſe be now inſulted with public declarations of their reciprocal attachment and eſteem; nay, even with the moſt fulſome panegyric of their ſordid and pernicious confederacy?

It has been ſaid by one of the parties, that "the Coalition was an experiment, and had ſucceeded." So far indeed it ſucceeded, that, during nine months, it procured its members the dignity and emoluments of two of the moſt diſtinguiſhed offices in the ſtate. To one it afforded the means of rioting in luxurious entertainments; to the other, of indulging his beloved ſlumbers in golden dreams of India. It ſucceeded in ſup-

porting expectations of riches and power beyond the common lot of even regal dominion; and it had almoſt ſucceeded in ſubverting the conſtitution of this country.

Theſe have been the genuine fruits of the Coalition-adminiſtration: but let us attend to what is ſaid on this ſubject by the other Duumvir, whom we ſhall find yet more myſterious than the former. As if the word *experiment* was at length become ungrateful to his ears, he has carefully avoided that appellation; but the monuments of his experimental fame cannot be ſacrificed to his delicacy. The port of Boſton, the banks of Newfoundland, the whole United States of America, witneſs the number of his experiments. His miniſtry was confeſſedly the moſt expenſive, the moſt unfortunate, and the moſt deſtructive, that has ever been experienced by Great Britain. Surpaſſing even the well-known example of unaccounted millions, he is the great defaulter

defaulter of an empire. But ſhall we, on one hand, deny his veracity, or, on the other, admit his abilities as a financier, when, with a breath of his mouth, he affects to liquidate his enormous debt to the nation? With a higher tone than his brother Duumvir, he boldly affirmed in this houſe, a few weeks ago, "that the Coalition had been the ſalvation of this country."

Num furis? an prudens ludis me, obſcura canendo.

It is the effect of extreme abſurdity to extinguiſh indignation; and I ſhall, therefore, for once, become the apologiſt of this Duumvir. His imagination had been ſo long fixed upon the territories of the Great Mogul, that he was become habituated to the magnificent language of an Aſiatic potentate. The expreſſion, in reality, conveys no idea; but, with the pomp of Oriental hyberbole, it means preciſely, *a tub for the whales:*

whales: for the juſtneſs of the interpretation, I appeal to the noble lord himſelf.

To attend to the language of the Coalition-miniſters, in their different ſituations, is a ſcene truly farcical. Are they members of the cabinet? All is complacency. The offices of ſtate, though ſome of them reeking with the horrid blood of ſelf-convicted fraud and peculation, are all in high flavour. Notwithſtanding miniſterial diſſipation or indolence, the affairs of the nation are proſperous in an aſtoniſhing degree. Every thing ſucceeds with the miniſters; from the ſimple experiment of the Coalition, even to ſalvation itſelf. Are they diſmiſſed from the ſervice of the crown? All is inſtantly reverſed. The *bouts rimés* of oppoſition are ſounded with the utmoſt flippancy and vehemence. There is a miniſtry, and no miniſtry. The miniſters, no matter whether diſtinguiſhed by their abilities, integrity, and application, have not the confidence of

this houſe. How long ſhall they inſult the dignity of this houſe? Nothing now can ſucced. It is not a time for experiment. Salvation is out of the queſtion. And the nation, which had lately been ſaved, God only knows from what impending deſtruction, is again upon the very brink of the abyſs.

Immania audere, et magna loqui, are the fundamental principles of the Coalition-ſyſtem of politics. The Highgate-oath, we know, is a favourite ſubject of pleaſantry with one, if not with both, of the Duumvirs; and they ſeem to have lately added to it the following important clauſes, viz. never to ſay the truth in public, when falſehood may better anſwer their purpoſe; and never to ceaſe from promoting diſtractions in the nation, unleſs they be permitted to govern it with abſolute authority.

By a peculiar fatality, which ought to exclude theſe men for ever from the adniſtration

miniſtration of government, they have proved equally pernicious to their country in war and in peace; both in the times of their diſſenſion and concord. Their profligate enmity has diveſted us of our colonies; and their friendſhip, their portentous friendſhip, threatens to complete the ruin of the ſtate.

Having now, ſir, as I had propoſed, laid before the houſe a retroſpective view of our late violent and unconſtitutional proceedings, I ſhall conclude by a ſhort expoſtulation with thoſe who are either the authors or abettors of them. The houſe, I hope, will pardon me for thus embracing the laſt opportunity I may ever have; for we cannot be far from the melancholy period, prophetically mentioned by the noble lord in the blue ribbon, on the ſubject of *tollendus*, at the time when he declared, according to his own elegant expreſſion, though not Oriental, perhaps likewiſe prophetic, that he would not *be kick'd*—

kick'd——up ſtairs. But before I proceed, I muſt obſerve, that, in a Britiſh houſe of parliament, it is a neceſſity of a new and ſingular kind, to have recourſe to arguments of a private and perſonal nature, in ſupporting the cauſe of the public. Ye have already outrageouſly tranſgreſſed the limits which the conſtitution has aſſigned to the democratical part of our government; and, if ye perſevere in your violent conduct, what, let me aſk you, will be the conſequence? If the ſovereign ſhall, with the wiſdom and firmneſs of a true patriot prince, reſiſt your daring attempt to controul or uſurp the juſt prerogatives of the executive power, ye may, in the fury of your intemperate career, lay violent hands on the ſinews of government; but ye muſt, by ſuch an act, render your own diſſolution unavoidable; and whatever public inconveniences may ariſe from that event, the *ſalus populi*, the *ſuprema lex*, will juſtify, to all the

world, the hazard of incurring, as well as a recourſe to the neceſſary means of ſupporting under them. Many of you may, I doubt not, be confident in the hope of a ſpeedy political reſurrection; but give me leave to remind you, that ye are not all dictators of your ſeveral diſtricts; and when ye return to thoſe regions, ye may meet with a Minos, and a Rhadamanthus, who, inſtead of hailing you with the ſalutation of "Well done, Good and Faithful Servants," will give you that retribution which ye have merited by your extravagant conduct during your preſent political exiſtence. Our ſovereign enjoys the warmeſt affections, his miniſters poſſeſs the confidence, of the nation; and the conteſt will be very unequal between the partizans of the Duumvirs on one hand, and the body of the people on the other. I bluſh for your underſtanding, if ye cannot penetrate into the private views of thoſe men; and both

for your ſpirit and public virtue, if ye can ſubmit to become the panders to a luſt of power, which would violate the conſtitution, if not overwhelm the liberties of your country.

FINIS.